

A Worthy Veteran Honored

How Uncle Luther Came to Lead the Memorial Day Parade

By RAY STANNARD BAKER

Uncle Tommy Dowell and Uncle Luther Dowell were twins only in age and patriotism. In everything else they were as different as black and white or hot and cold. Uncle Tommy was short and puffy and bald of head, with a reminiscent twinkle in his blue eyes and a certain sprightliness in his step that quite belied his age. Also, he had two good, stout, stubby legs, although they were a bit bowed and stiff, so that he thumped smartly with his heels when he walked.

What Uncle Tommy lacked of reaching nature's standard of a man Uncle Luther made up. He was gaunt and stooping and so spare that one almost expected to hear him rattle in his old blue clothes like withered peas in a pod. When he walked he lurched at every step and bore heavily on his cane, for he had left his good right leg on the bloody slopes at Chickamauga, and for nearly thirty years he had stumped painfully about on a wooden leg.

Uncle Tommy was bluff and prosperous. He lived in a comfortable house in West Aiden.

Uncle Luther had a little one story shop across the county line in the adjoining town of Amery, where he sold leaky milk pans and tinkered clocks. It was next the lane in the further corner of his son Jonathan's land, and he made up his own bed and cooked his meals in the little room in the rear. He seemed at least twenty years older than Uncle Tommy, and he had become querulous and quavery, so that Jonathan and his thrifty wife groaned under the responsibility of looking after him.

And that shows how two brothers who have been boys together, men together and soldiers together may drift apart. For years Uncle Tommy and Uncle Luther had not met except at gatherings of old soldiers, and these were not pleasant meetings. For the two little towns, albeit they lay out on the wide Minnesota prairie, with only an imaginary line between them, could not agree. It was the kind of dissension that grows rank and strong in little communities where there are few outside interests to occupy the intervals of attention. And the old soldiers took it up and fought it out as valiantly as they had marched on Vicksburg. They might have had a Grand Army post with reminiscent campfires, and they might have had Fourth of July celebrations and Memorial day parades, but as certainly as Uncle Tommy led the hosts of West Aiden in one direction Amery and Captain Enoch Bradley could be depended upon to march in exactly the opposite direction.

As for Uncle Luther, he always followed Uncle Tommy's procession wherever it might lead. Again and again the old soldiers of the two towns met in the interests of harmony. Uncle Tommy would come to preside, and Uncle Luther would second the motions, and then they all would slump off into the quagmire of dissension.

At such times the fires of a stirring past would blaze up in Uncle Luther's faded eyes, his stooped shoulders would stiffen back, a faint flush would steal into his cheeks, and he would nod his old gray head as if in time to martial music that none but he could hear. Sometimes the tears came up to his eyes, and the boy who was fortunate enough to hear him talk thrilled with the quick pride of strife and longed to shoulder a carbine and march away to the music of life and drum.

For two years the towns had held Memorial day services, but they had been mournfully despoiled. Uncle Tommy by sheer force of character had been marshal of the day, and Uncle Luther and a few stragglers from Amery had marched with the parade. But Captain Enoch and his supporters stood by with gloomy forbearance and offered no word of encouragement. There was really little need of Memorial day services except in the abstract. The cemetery, where the discord of the two towns was buried, lay on a bare prairie knoll set around with precise rows of spindling cottonwoods that languished half the summer with thirst and whipping winds and dust—and it contained no soldiers' graves. But Uncle Tommy's parades marched up the road to the cemetery gate and back again, and Uncle Luther felt that the country's dead, wherever they might lie, had been honored.

On the third year the old soldiers met again, thoroughly determined to be harmonious. In ten minutes' time Uncle Tommy was thumping on the pine table with his cane, and several of the other old soldiers were clinging to Captain Enoch's coat-tails, while the two men glared and threatened. And then Captain Enoch executed a well planned flank movement, routed Uncle Tommy and ran up the Amery colors. A few minutes later his faction, acting with the right of might, had decided upon all the important features of the parade. And to further rout Uncle Tommy and his retainers they appointed Uncle Luther to the honored position of marshal of the day.

At first Uncle Luther was dumb with astonishment. He had as good right to be marshal as Uncle Tommy. They

had belonged to the same regiment, and both had reached the rank of corporal, Uncle Luther on one leg and Uncle Tommy on two. But Uncle Luther always had deferred to Uncle Tommy as if he had been an older brother, and it seemed to him hardly short of sacrifice to appear as Uncle Tommy's rival. So he struggled to his feet and held up a lean finger to catch Captain Enoch's eye.

"I'd rather have Tommy have the place," he faltered. "He's better fitted for it than I be."

But Uncle Tommy was storming down the room.

"Keep it!" he roared, and he went out, slamming the door after him.

Uncle Luther followed him a few steps wistfully, and then he dropped back in his seat and listened dumbly while Captain Enoch and the exultant revolvers planned the details of the parade.

"It's Amery's turn this year," glared Captain Enoch.

Uncle Luther walked up the road alone. His step was brisker than usual and there was a brighter gleam in his eye. He could not help feeling proud that he had been honored. There were other men in Amery who would have served better in his place—he knew that well enough, for he was old, and he didn't walk easily—but he was glad with the joy of appreciation.

For so many years he had been an unnoticed, crippled tinker, and when at last recognition came to him, even at the expense of his more fortunate brother, he could not help exulting.

"Well, I fought for it," he mumbled, "an' I bled for it. I'd a-given both my legs if necessary—they know that." Then, after a pause, he said aloud, "But I wisht Tommy'd got it."

He opened the door of his little shop and went in. His eyes swept the familiar disorder of the room, the rusty tools hanging on the wall, the bleared old clocks, the pots and pans, all the toys of a second childhood. He was glad to be at home again, for he was worn out and trembling with the unwonted excitement of the meeting.

Outside the sun shone on the green prairie, and there was warm, puddy dust in the road, but Uncle Luther's blood was thin and cold, and he shivered in the damp interior of the shop. So he brought his soldering brazier from the corner and stirred the coals into a bright glow. Then he bent over to warm his hands.

Jonathan Dowell came down the lane between his prosperous fields on his way to town. Little Dick was with



"WE THOUGHT WE'D DECORATE THE LIVIN' THIS YEAR, LUTHER."

him. When Uncle Luther saw them he went to the door and beckoned.

"Come in, Jonathan! Come in!" he called.

His face shone with pride, and he told with feverish eagerness of the new honor which the day had brought him.

"Nonsense," interrupted Jonathan testily. "Don't you know, father, that you're gettin' too old and feeble to take part in such things? You ain't able to walk to the graveyard an' back, an' you're only stirrin' up trouble between the families. Uncle Tommy'll never forgive you."

"I know it," he faltered. "I know it, Jonathan. Tommy'd ought to have it. I told 'em so. I said Tommy'd ought to have it."

The end of the lane was the end of Dick's little world, and he turned and lolled back, humming a tune to himself, as a child will. Uncle Luther stood in the doorway and watched him wistfully. Of a sudden he recalled how Uncle Tommy had looked when they were boys together.

"Just like Tommy, exactly," he said half aloud, gazing fondly at the little fellow. Then he bent over him stiffly and beckoned.

"Come see gran'pa," he said, smiling enticingly.

Dick crossed his hands behind his back and looked at Uncle Luther soberly. He was a sunny haired little fellow, with blue eyes and puckery red lips, and he stood tall in the bright May sunshine. Uncle Luther regarded him seriously.

"I told 'em I didn't want to march," he said protestingly. "I said Tommy'd do it better'n I could. But Captain Enoch, ner any of 'em, would listen to me. Don't go 'way, Dickey; don't go 'way an' leave gran'pa," beseechingly.

But the little boy was edging away. He didn't understand, and he was afraid.

"Don't go way," said Uncle Luther

anxiously. "Come an' see what gran'pa's got for Dickey."

He turned and hobbled painfully across his shop. He put on his spectacles and opened a drawer in his work bench, and in its depths he found a stick of horehound candy. Dick stood with one pudgy hand resting on the door frame, peering into the shop with wide eyes.

"Candy," announced Uncle Luther expressively.

Dick drew a little nearer, glancing from the candy to his grandfather's wrinkled face. Uncle Luther waved the stick like a wizard's wand and lured Dick nearer and nearer until a dirty little hand closed over the candy. Then he reached out slyly and cautiously and gathered Dick in his arms.

"Ain't you goin' to kiss gran'pa?" he asked eagerly.

But the little boy wriggled away and ran out of the door. Uncle Luther watched him lolting up the lane in the sunshine, sucking his candy, until the vision blurred in his dim old eyes. Then he returned to his brazier. He sat down and drew his chair almost over it. He bent double, with his elbows on his knees and his head resting on his hands, and there he sat alone for a long time. Finally he straightened up. The subtle warmth of the fire had stolen through all his body. He leaned back in his chair, his head drooped over to one side and his work worn old hands lay palm up on his knees. He was fast asleep.

The brazier under him continued to glow and send his cheery comfort stealing up around his chair. It had a friendliness and hearty warmth that were more than the kindness of many of the old man's friends.

The dusk of evening came down and filled the corners with shadows, and presently a glow that was not all in the brazier began to illumine the center of the room. A thin, wavering mist of smoke curled up around the old man and crept silently along the dingy ceiling. A moment later there was a sharp burst of flame that disappeared, as suddenly as it came. The old man's trouser leg rested against the hot brazier, and the fine fire gnawed and sparkled in the heavy cloth. A few shavings on the littered floor of the shop were crisping with sudden wisps of flame, and the chair legs were on fire. But Uncle Luther slept on, wholly unconscious of his danger.

Jonathan Dowell, returning from the village, saw a sinister glare in the shop windows. He rushed into the room, seized the old man and lifted him swiftly to one side. Then he beat out the fire with a gunny sack.

Uncle Luther sat up, trembling and terrified. His wooden leg was gone. It had burned almost to the stump, and the charred remains were still smoking.

Jonathan Dowell's voice rang with anger.

"What won't you do next, father?" he said. "You've set yourself on fire and nearly burned up the shop. That wooden leg of yours cost me just \$50, and it'll be a long time before I can afford another."

And then he saw dimly the agony in his father's face, and he softened. He was not a bad man nor even a harsh man—only thoughtless. "You must learn to be more careful, father," he said gently and yet insistently, as if he talked to a child.

Uncle Luther was glad when his son went away. He crept to his little back room like a wounded dog and lay down on the bed.

"Too bad to trouble Jonathan an' his wife," he muttered. "Cory is so thrifty an' partic'lar. I'm careless; I know it. I'm gettin' old." And then after a time his mind reverted to the earlier interests of the day, and he said aloud, "I wish Tommy'd got it."

News travels quickly in a small town, and the next morning the sympathetic and the curious came to console with Uncle Luther and to examine the remains of the \$50 leg and to point out where the fire had charred the chair.

Among the very first to call was Captain Enoch Bradley, who was a hearty, warm blooded, irascible old fellow, and his bluff sympathy went far toward solacing Uncle Luther in his affliction.

"Twan't so bad as if you hadn't lost it before," he comforted.

But Uncle Luther had no mind for treating his loss frivolously. The years had crushed all of the humor out of him and left him only tragedy.

"I was thinkin'," he said, "that now I can't march. Praps Amery—might let Tommy have it!"

Captain Enoch frowned darkly, but Uncle Luther hurried on:

"He's more commandin' than I be, er ever was, er ever will be, an' he's had practice!"

"Oh, you'll be ready to march by the proportions of a wooden leg. It would not do as well as a regular artificial leg, such as the one he had been wearing, but he hoped that it would serve him for the Memorial day exercises."

He still cherished a desire to march with the parade, although he knew that Jonathan would not approve of it. He was afraid of Jonathan. But whole days slipped by when he was

not strong enough to work, and yet he clung to the task with feverish eagerness. The man within him protested that he was still good for something, that old age had not robbed him of everything.

On the morning of Memorial day the whittling was all finished, but there remained the task of attaching the straps, and Uncle Luther knew that he could not hope to complete the leg in time for the exercises. So he laid it away, and toward noon he dressed up in his best blue clothes and put on his wide brimmed black hat with the gold cord around the crown. Then he hobbled out of the door and dropped down on a box by the fence with his back resting against a post. Where Uncle Luther sat he could look up the yellow stretch of roadway, and he knew that he could see the parade almost as soon as it left the town. It would pass the end of the lane on its way to the cemetery, and he hoped, with the optimism of the very old and the very young, that it would come back by the same road. Seeing it was next to marching with it.

Uncle Luther put on his long distance glasses, and he saw a blur of blue moving along the road from the village. Above it there was a blur of red and white. A moment later they resolved themselves into a knot of old soldiers, with the flag flapping above them. Uncle Luther took a long breath, and his eyes shone. Suddenly a hand began to play the stirring music of "Marching Through Georgia."

"They've got the band," exclaimed Uncle Luther in a voice that choked with ecstasy.

Unconsciously he rose on his one good foot and took off his hat. His eyes dimmed, and as the culminating strains of the music came up to him another picture formed on his misty glasses. He saw the boys in blue—not a meager handful of gray and stooping remnants, but boys with fresh young faces and broad shoulders and proud chins. They were muddy to the knees with marching, but they were ragged and tattered, and they swept by to the drums and fifes, regiment after regiment and brigade after brigade, and orderlies clattered up and down with yellow envelopes stuck in their belts, and the shells were screeching from the Confederate heights. He saw the companies wheel and deploy. He saw them strip down and form in line at "charge bayonets."

The big black guns were leaping the ruts in the road, with the gunners clinging desperately to the caissons. Then he saw the long line of gray rise up over the hill and pour itself down the slope. He saw the ragged, mile long flash of the carbines, and he would have leaped forward to the charge if for a single moment he had heard the bug's shrill summons.

Uncle Luther's spectacles were dimmed. He polished them off with shaky fingers and looked again. Behind the band there was a stretch of white that seemed to twinkle in the sunshine.

"They've got the children, too," he faltered.

Then the old fellows in blue swung at the corner. They were keeping military line, and something of the old spirit had thrilled their steps into an unwonted precision. The band, wheeling with them, swept into "Italy Round the Flag, Boys." Uncle Luther leaped forward on his one good leg, waved his hat around his head and shouted, "Hurrah, hurrah!" His head was thrown back, his eyes flashed, his breath came back quick and hot.

Now they had reached the end of the lane, and Uncle Luther could make out the full length of the parade. It was by far the greatest celebration that the town ever had known, and his heart swelled with pride at the thought. Not once did he recall his own disappointment and sorrow. It was all for the glory of the day.

Suddenly Uncle Luther shrank back. What were they trying to do? He felt an impulse to run forward and tell them that they had missed the way to the cemetery and that the lane ran only as far as Jonathan Dowell's house. But before he could decide what to do the old soldiers stopped almost in front of his own little shop. The band had swung out to one side. It was playing "America," and the sweet, shrill voices of the children rose and fell with the music. Uncle Luther sank back on his box, trembling. Through a mist of great happiness he saw Uncle Tommy and Captain Enoch advancing toward him side by side. He couldn't believe it at first; he didn't pretend to believe it.

"I'm gettin' old," he muttered, "an' I'm not steady in my mind."

But he rose to meet them. Uncle Tommy carried an odd shaped package in his arms, and when he was near to Uncle Luther he stopped and cleared his throat. Every one was silent, listening.

"I calculate to make a speech," he stammered, "but we thought we'd decorate the livin' this year. Luther, here's a new leg."

He held out the odd shaped package helplessly. Uncle Luther did not seem to see it at all. He reached forward and put his hands on his brother's shoulders, and the leg fell down unheeded between the two old men.

Uncle Luther strapped on the leg with trembling, inefficient fingers, and then Captain Enoch and Uncle Tommy marched him out between them. Uncle Tommy's own horse and buggy, decorated with ribbons and flowers, stood in front of the shop.

"You're goin' to be the marshal of the day," said Captain Enoch.

"But—Tommy!"

"Get in," commanded Uncle Tommy in a voice that was not to be disputed.

Uncle Luther, sitting as straight as a trooper, drove out at the head of the procession, while the band, with a rattle of drums, swept into "Hail, Columbia, Happy Land."

"I'm afraid we might run into an iceberg." "The danger is very slight, auntie." "Well, give the captain a dollar anyhow, and then he'll be extra careful."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Gabe—Johnson is always broke. What's the matter with him? Steve—He's always trying to get rich quick.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

A lovely magnifying glass. A mirror is to every lass. Her charms are magnified in it; It does not show her faults a bit. —Catholic Standard and Times.

Townley—Jones says that he's making \$5,000 a year out of the chicken business. Subbubs—I'll bet it is out of it. He's not making that in the chicken business.—Boston Transcript.

Judge—You have been here twice before, and twice I have sent you to jail. Have you anything to say why I should not send you there again? Prisoner—I have scruples against a third term, your honor.—Judge.

Of't does it cause me sorrow great And leave me somewhat frightened When the "instructed delegate" Seems strangely unenlightened. —Washington Star.

"I see your son has gone to work." "Yep." "How is he getting along?" "Oh, fine. Anything in the way of a novelty always appeals to him."—Washington Herald.

"Then the wedding was not altogether a success?" "No; the groom's mother cried louder than the bride's mother. It was considered very bad form."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

The meanest thing about our work, The thing that makes us rue it, Is that that makes us try to shirk, The thing we have to do it. —Cincinnati Enquirer.

"I am another man since I was married," exclaimed the happy benedict. "And does your wife love that other man?"—Puck.

"Grandma might have had an army pension as well as not." "And what prevents her from getting it?" "Why, she married a stay at home."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

"Since I purchased some gloves made of chamois," remarked a young man called Samois, "My hands feel quite nice. Where they once felt like ice. They were always so cold and clammy." —Satire.

"Do you think selective memories are the best?" "I don't know about that, but they are mighty handy in an investigation."—Baltimore American.

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A. M.		P. M.		STATIONS		P. M.		P. M.		P. M.	
SUN	SUN	SUN	SUN	Albany	Binghamton	Philadelph	Wilkes-Barre	Lake Lodore	Carbondale	Keene	Stearns
8:30	10:00	10:00	4:30	2:00	10:00	4:09	7:14	7:38	8:05	1:35	5:50
10:00	12:30	12:30	2:15	12:40	8:45	9:35	2:55	7:25	7:54	1:25	5:40
11:15	1:45	1:45	3:30	1:10	11:30	12:20	3:40	8:15	8:44	1:54	6:10
12:30	3:00	3:00	4:45	2:20	12:40	1:30	4:50	9:25	9:54	2:24	6:40
1:45	4:15	4:15	6:00	3:30	1:50	2:40	6:00	10:35	11:04	3:34	7:50
3:00	5:30	5:30	7:15	4:40	3:00	3:50	7:10	11:45	12:14	4:44	8:10
4:15	6:45	6:45	8:30	5:50	4:10	5:00	8:20	12:55	1:24	5:54	9:20
5:30	8:00	8:00	9:45	7:00	5:20	6:10	9:30	1:05	1:34	7:04	10:30
6:45	9:15	9:15	11:00	8:10	6:30	7:20	10:40	2:15	2:44	8:14	11:40
8:00	10:30	10:30	12:15	9:20	7:40	8:30	11:50	3:25	3:54	9:24	12:50
9:15	11:45	11:45	1:00	10:30	8:50	9:40	12:00	4:35	5:04	10:34	1:00
10:30	1:00	1:00	2:15	11:40	10:00	10:50	1:10	5:45	6:14	11:44	2:10
11:45	2:15	2:15	3:30	12:50	11:10	12:00	2:20	6:55	7:24	12:54	3:20
1:00	3:30	3:30	4:45								